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Elective Affinities - Observations on contemporary printmaking through drawing.

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Abstract

My paper aims to present reflections for debate on the interrelationship between drawing and print in the contemporary art context rather than in historical terms. In particular it asks how the changes in drawing and printmaking which are summed up by the notion of an 'expanded practice' have brought these two areas into closer proximity. By focusing on three works by Kiki Smith, Christiane Baumgartner and Oscar Muñoz, shown at the 2009/10 Philagrafika International Print Triennial in Philadelphia, the paper engages with the effect of the implicit and explicit decoupling of the hand as a primary tool and signifier of drawing through the adoption of print- and/or camera-based strategies. To which extent does the expansion of techniques and, indeed, technologies change and challenge the discourse on drawing with its focus on trace, mark, gesture? How do such approaches question the assumed immediacy and directness of drawing as well as its proximity to the body? What are the implications of such strategies and techniques for the subjectivity of the maker and viewer as well as signification as such? In which way does the incorporation of circuitous print techniques and the adoption of camera images function at the level of image and meaning? In what manner do they reinforce as well as cast doubt on medium-specific assumptions and effects? (Where) do we draw the line (between drawing and print)?

This paper will look at printmaking obliquely through the medium of drawing and vice versa. The aim is not to define and fix disciplinary boundaries but to contribute to an elucidation of similarities and overlaps as well as differences. The paper will thus respond to the conference theme of 'intersections' and 'counterpoints'. The educational and broader implications of such 'border' explorations are crucial at a time when former disciplinary boundaries are being widely abolished.

Historically, drawing and printmaking have been closely intermeshed, yet have also clearly been treated as separate areas of artistic practice.¹ They have also shared a marginalised status within art and culture.² In drawing's case, this has been mitigated by its foundational condition as the basis of the traditional arts since the Renaissance, for printmaking by its fundamental role in creating knowledge in culture and science.³ In recent years, both drawing and printmaking have moved from a 'supplementary' position to a more conspicuous presence in contemporary art practice.⁴ Further,

¹ On the historical interrelationship between drawing and printmaking, see Rosand (2002), especially Chapter 5. See Petherbridge (2010, 16ff) on the interrelationship of drawing with other media, including printmaking and its difference from them.

² Kantor (2005), for example, explains that the drawings collected by the Museum of Modern Art in New York were initially 'acquired to enhance viewers' understanding of the Museum's primary collection of painting and sculpture' (p.6).

³ As the title of his well-known book indicates, Ivins (1969/2001) was one of the first authors to stress the wider social role of printmaking.

⁴ Harbison/Dillon (2009) sum up the recent position of drawing as a practice in its own right (Foreword, no p.nr.). The bibliography in the spring edition 2009 of the German art magazine *Kunstforum*, accessible even to non-German speakers, gives an overview of the range of major drawing exhibitions and critical publications, especially since 2000 (pp 182-187). See also Deanna Petherbridge, 2010.

as with all current art practices, both drawing and printmaking have expanded their remit to include formerly divergent categories such as installation, video, digital image modes, 3D and animation. In addition, processes and images which in one context or exhibition are categorised as drawings may well be regarded as prints in another.⁵

Of all the different assumptions about drawing, its function and meaning, there is one persistent quality that stands out. It is drawing's assumed immediacy and directness as a physical, mental and emotional expression of the artist (Rosand, 2002, 18).⁶ This has implications for the viewer too. Drawing was and is considered to put the viewer into a privileged proximity with the artist. In the context of postmodernity these notions and other, formerly obvious assumptions, as well as drawing practice itself, have been queried (Rosand, 2002, XXII; Dillon, 2009, 8).

The reasons for such a critique are well known: They lie in changed notions of the self, as well as questions regarding (artistic) authorship and originality. Not least this is as a result of the ever increasing entanglement of humans with technology and especially digital technology's capacity for replication. The implications for drawing - as with other art forms - have resulted in a greater self-consciousness regarding its modes and means of operation. This is observable in, for example, frequent references to or reliance on photography and other media forms. German artist Rosemarie Trockel's extensive drawing oeuvre provides an excellent example of this trend. By the same token, media that have traditionally been coupled with drawing, such as charcoal, pen, pencil and paper, are being replaced with unusual utensils and/or material substrates as well as procedures not normally associated with the form. Examples are artists' Julie Cockburn's and Martyn Cross's work which involves embroidery or knitting and Cadi Froehlich's hot drink rings on a tea table, all represented in the 2010 British *Jerwood Drawing Prize* exhibition and indicative of wider trends.⁷ The question is to what extent this change in media and processes affects and alters the

Printmaking enjoys a similar popularity. In addition to older, well-established biennales and triennales such as Krakov, Tallin and Ljubana in Europe, 2009 saw the inception of major new print events and exhibitions, such as *Philagrafika* in Philadelphia, USA, the Northern Print Biennale in Newcastle, UK. Several surveys have appeared in recent years which update and critically complement Susan Tallman's 1996 overview *The Contemporary Print* (Miles/Saunders, 2006; Noyce 2006; Coldwell and Noyce, both 2010).

⁵ Take but one example, Charlotte Hodes's 2D paper cut collages combined with ink jet printing which won the 2006 British Jerwood Drawing Prize. Such works have also been exhibited as prints, for example, in the 2007 *Committed to Print* exhibition curated by Paul Thirkell at the Royal Academy of the West of England, Bristol, which featured works produced at the Centre for Fine Print Research (CFPR) at the University of the West of England in Bristol.

⁶ It is impossible to tackle this particular aspect in a footnote, but see, for example, Kovats's (2007) subtitle and p.7. See also the following authors for various aspects of this issue and sometimes differing positions: Petherbridge (2010 and 1991, 20); De Zegher/Newman (2003, 7); Garner (2008,9); TRACEY (the online peer-reviewed journal concerned with contemporary drawing research hosted by Loughborough University) and authors of the 2007 exhibition catalogue *Drawing Now; Between the Lines of Contemporary Art* (IX). See also TRACEY's web site: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ac/tracey/index.html>. Accessed 8 December 2010. From an entirely different perspective anthropologist Tim Ingold (2007) in his wide-ranging and inspiring discussion of 'lines', implicitly confirms but also queries the proposition of unmediated and straightforward expression that the terms 'primary' and 'primacy' imply. He stresses that neither drawing, nor the closely related process of writing, are 'natural' but as 'a product of history' are 'man-made' and 'artificial' (p.147).

⁷ For information on the artists, see the free, downloadable catalogue on the *Jerwood Drawing Prize* web page: <http://www.jerwoodvisualarts.org/page/3095/Jerwood+Drawing+Prize+2010/73>. Accessed 2 December 2010. Unusual materials or processes also proliferate in print. Indeed, it could be argued that the drawing by Cadi Froehlich just mentioned is as much print as drawing! For a related phenomenon in a print exhibition, see for example, Pepón Osorio's *You're Never Ready*, 2009, an Inkjet print on confetti in *Philagrafika*. Information on Osorio can be found on the *Philagrafika* web site: <http://www.philagrafika2010.org/artist/pep%C3%B3n-osorio>. Accessed 5 December 2010.

fundamental qualities of drawing, its affinity to or identification with trace, mark, line and gesture, consequently also its relationship with the viewer.⁸

What does a consideration of printmaking add to the equation? And have the changes mentioned above brought drawing and printmaking closer due to printmaking's much more mediated nature? Printmaking always posits its image at one remove and hence excludes or at least distances it from drawing's ostensibly 'natural' affiliation with 'immediacy'. Add to this the much longer connection of printmaking with photographic processes which have been particularly popular since the 1960s. Such an increase in mediation at play in the print enhances its ability to query drawing's often still persistent collapse into direct expression. Nevertheless, printmaking – still – shares drawing's propensity for the trace, mark, line and gesture albeit circuitously, at one remove.⁹

In considering work by three artists exhibited at *Philagrafika*, the inaugural international biennial in Philadelphia in 2009/10, I hope to shed some light on contemporary printmaking's (inter)relationship with drawing, especially the question of a complication of drawing's immediacy and direct artistic expression in its interplay with print. My longer term objective is to contribute to a conceptualisation of this relationship. However, the paper offers no definite answers or complete case studies, but observations for debate.

Let me start with a most ostensibly hand-drawn work by American artist Kiki Smith, her ink drawing with palladium leaf and glitter *Tree with Bird*, 2009, shown at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. (Fig. 1) In addition to demonstrating the intersection between drawing and printmaking as far as exhibition practice is concerned, of which I spoke earlier, this work can be argued to display in its mode of drawing the artist's well-known engagement with printmaking. The latter is a vital part of her 'multi-practice' as a sculptor.¹⁰ The affinity to printmaking in this and other drawings by Smith lies in the 'scratchy' appearance of an often searching line. It is a short line that tentatively approaches or circumscribes its object/subject. The hesitant, uncertain nature of such accumulated marks, their nervy spikiness, places them close to the quality of an etched line which appears slowed down by meeting the metal's resistance. Furthermore, the use of palladium leaf as a planar field that encircles the figure brings to mind the woodcut's propensity to construct its subject in high relief while the surrounding area's barely modulated flatness recalls other printing techniques, such as the screen print. Here, the silvery foil serves to set up a contrast. On the one hand, there is the level, shimmering collage-like imprint which is reminiscent of the halo of religious art across cultures and centuries and/or, more profanely and more disturbingly, maybe even the grey metal tables of medical or forensic institutions. Its mirror-like, reflective surface attracts the viewer at the same time as it creates a disorienting effect. On the other hand, the central part of the image consists of the accumulation of almost provisional traces which result in the emergence of the naked female body. The marks' timid touch appears as an equivalent of the vulnerable and almost visibly changing

⁸ One telling formulation of these changes is Catherine de Zegher's (2006) heading of a show on contemporary drawing at Marion Goodman Gallery New York, as *Freeing the Line*. The title of the 2009 British touring exhibition of contemporary drawings *The End of the Line* makes a similar point, although on reading the catalogue, it becomes clear that it is not the line as such that is in question, rather more the historical qualities associated with the line. See Matthias Bleyl (2009) for a brief but illuminating account of the emergence of the primacy of the line in the context of the Renaissance term of 'disegno' and especially the latter's often contradictory associations with ideas on the one hand and mere formal prowess on the other (p.75-76). For a more in-depth debate of the terms which is beyond the scope of the present paper, see James Elkins's (1998) book *On pictures and the words that fail them*, especially chapter 1 'Marks, Traces, Traits, Contours, Orli, and Splendores' and chapters 4 and 5 'The Signs of Writing' and 'The Common Origins of Pictures, Writing, and Notation'. For a philosophical discussion of the terms 'trace' and 'mark', see Michael Newman's (2003) essay 'The Traces and Marks of Drawing'. See also de Zegher (2003) on the notion of 'gesture' in relation to the trace (p.267).

⁹ Paul Hamilton (2009) has considered drawing and printmaking in his essay 'Drawing with printmaking technology in a digital age' but does rely on received notions of the terms of drawing.

¹⁰ I have adopted the term 'multi-practice' from Petherbridge (2010, 7).

flesh. Only the talismanic bunch of bird-feathers, clasped by the figure, appears to hold the two areas together. Its assured, confident realism suggests a firm grasp on actuality.

Self-consciousness towards drawing in the sense explained earlier can be located in Smith's work by the juxtaposition of different drawing- or image-making modes with a host of historical connotations. There is the drawn mark's ability to represent the outside world versus its indexical quality as trace of the artist's hand and, by implication his/her body, mind and soul. Traditionally the mind - and creative genius - was specifically associated with the concept of 'disegno', its affiliation with 'design' alluding to composition as well as invention or conception.¹¹ In contrast, *disegno* in, amongst other forms, the sketch or unfinished drawing tended to be understood as in opposition to the mind and in terms of closeness to the body and the soul of the artist.¹² Since the Romantic era, and especially within Modernism, the lack of finish typical of a sketchy and/or seemingly unlearned mode of drawing became a pre-eminent feature of drawing. Petherbridge (1992/2010) has termed this preference for the outwardly untrained mode of drawing the 'dumb line'. It forms an essential part of a seemingly natural, yet largely affected regressiveness which has stood for the direct trace of authentic, individual artistic expression (Petherbridge, 2010, 420). Smith's multi-modal approach of different drawing styles in combination with the planar, print-like collage frames the authorial and authoritative activity of the artist in a more complex and reflective way compared to such historically inflected modes as described by Petherbridge. While clearly pointing to the subjective, Smith's procedure invites the viewer to an imaginative re-creation rather than straight identification.

The second work I wish to consider is that of the German printmaker Christiane Baumgartner. Her woodcuts of the urbanized landscape are based on and filtered through the medium of video. In this respect, they are indicative of a different type of multi-practice from that of Smith. Rather than primarily working in two or more different media alongside and independently of each other, as many artists do, Baumgartner fuses these two historically and technically diverse image technologies. This conflation sets both in relief (pun intended), in other words, it allows a deconstruction of their otherwise taken-for-granted qualities. Suggestive of the graphism of video 'noise', although not caused by it, Baumgartner invades the stilled, singular video image with dark and light lines.¹³ More often than not, these are horizontal (see *Nachtfahrt*, 2009), but in some works they assume a complex moiré pattern (see *Luftbild*, 2008/9, Fig. 2). The original image or scene emerges, ostensibly, in spite of this noise. But this is only partially so. While it is perfectly possible to translate the graded tonal structure of a camera-like image into woodcut by following the tonal gradations through a varied texture of incisions as, for example, British artist Emma Stibbon has successfully done, Baumgartner employs a different method. The positive-negative relationship which is normally at play in the woodcut and which literally exposes the drawn (and to-be printed) line or image area rather than incising it as in etching or engraving is repeated in form of visual noise by Baumgartner. Moreover, it is really the noise or interference which reveals the image/scene and not just, as in the conventional woodcut, the contouring lines or areas. Yet, these altogether artificial, alien and non-representational components are not, as one might expect, machine-like and absolutely precise, but carefully crafted incisions. As such, they bear the mark of

¹¹ Speaking of the Renaissance development of the notion of *disegno*, Rosand (2002) explains: 'Disegno comes to be recognized not only as the means of realizing idea but as the very source of idea itself' (p.55).

¹² 'It is in the immediacy and indeterminacy of the sketch rather than in the studied closure of the finished drawing that character [of the artist] is most legible; in the spontaneity of the instinctively drawn line, uncorrected and unpolished, is revealed the personal gesture of the inventing hand' (Rosand, 2002, 22). See also Petherbridge (2010) on the implications for contemporary practice of the historical repercussions of the conception and practice of the sketch and sketching (p.4 and p.12, p.45 and 216).

¹³ In an interview with José Roca, the director of *Philagrafika*, Baumgartner explains the defining feature of her images in terms of artistic process rather than as a deliberate iconographic choice: 'Actually I did not use the existing monitor lines for my woodcuts, although many people do think this is the case. I created my own raster. I was looking for a possibility, how to print a grayscale photograph just in two components, in black and white, and so I came to use the line grid.' Accessed 29 November 2010. Available from: <http://philagrafika.blogspot.com/2009/05/interview-christiane-baumgartner.html>.

the maker in their slightly wavering, undulating quality.¹⁴ They operate, in addition to connoting the familiar signs of technical disturbance, almost as signs of themselves. In the language of the woodcut, they expose its basic functioning as a mere alteration between light and dark, of the black ink and the whitish colour of the paper, or between positive and negative lines, arranged in alternating bands or (as with the moiré prints) in patterns. At another level, Baumgartner's method could be seen as a clever deconstruction of the basic paradox of the drawn line in its manifestation as outline, namely that its representational function is pure conjecture: Line/outline does not exist in nature (Rosand, 2002, 26).

Just as in Smith's case, the means of image making are referenced, even foregrounded. Baumgartner's linear manoeuvres complicate the visibility of the image, quite literally, and metaphorically remind us of the incomprehensibility that is part and parcel of all images and vision itself (Derrida, 1993; Garner, 2008, 60ff). Such intrusive meddling is especially relevant vis a vis the realism that still adheres to the camera image, notwithstanding the possibilities of digital manipulation.

In other respects too, Baumgartner's uni-dimensional operations turn out to be revelatory devices. Let us remind ourselves of the character of the image source with which we are dealing. The derivation of the single image from potentially thousands of moving frames is intimidated by an apparent arbitrariness in terms of the chosen view and composition. To approach such an image via an outmoded technique such as the woodcut already slows the image down, as it were, and prevents a customary response.¹⁵ A further deceleration is indicated by the labour-intensive threading of the surface. If the line of the woodcut traditionally helps to represent the actual object/scene, it usually does so transparently, without ostensibly drawing attention to itself. Yet in Baumgartner's print the insistent wefting (or patterning) foregrounds the repetitive, mechanistic, mediated operation of the technique and, moreover, re-constructs the image as a mere surface rather than primarily in terms of a represented scene. As we've already observed, at one level, the interference (in a double sense) of the simply executed lines that coincide with the descriptive lines signal the woodcut's basic linear economy. Yet, they do so while simultaneously exposing the artist's touch. But the touch of the line here is not symptomatic of an expressive, unitary self. It acts more as a reminder, an index of bodily discharge and manual labour rather than as the expression of an inner self. Hence it points to rather than divulges the personal. Besides, it places the self in a broader socio-political framework such as the increasing intermeshing with technology and the changes that ensue for both self and work (artistic and non-artistic). Still, the densely worked surface yields an affective charge that counteracts the seemingly neutral geometry of image and lines. As with Smith, Baumgartner's multi-faceted procedural tactics of negotiation between print, video and drawing engage the viewer in a complex way, entailing the haptic, affective and conceptual.

The third and final work from *Philagrafika* which I am considering is Columbian artist Oscar Muñoz's *Narcissi in process*. (Fig. 3) This piece, started in 1994, consists of a set of on-going self-portraits. Unusually these are printed with charcoal dust on water in shallow vitrines by a specially developed screen printing method. The containers are lined with paper onto which the pigment eventually settles during the gradual drying process.¹⁶ At first glance this work seems to be more related to

¹⁴ Baumgartner describes this aspect of her work in her interview with Roca thus: 'The cutting process is more something like a meditation, where I am concentrated but still have my mind open.' (ibid.)

¹⁵ This is indeed one way in which the artist wants her images to function, as the following exchange from the interview with Roca demonstrates:

JR: So your prints, which take a long time to make, effectively slow down time by extending the moment of the constitution of the image from a brief second (the video frame) to entire months... CB: Yes, this is one aspect of my work.

¹⁶ Entry on the artist on the *Philagrafika* website: <http://www.philagrafika2010.org/artist/oscar-mu%C3%B1oz>. Accessed on 28 November 2010.

photography than a discussion of drawing in relation to print. After all, there are no lines, no drawn marks. Yet, one could regard the whole – screen-printed - image as a mark.¹⁷ This seems justified by the material decompression of the time-honored drawing substance of charcoal into miniscule components. By highlighting the usually invisible stuff of the photograph, which is both suggestive of the chemical grain of analogue photography as well as the pixellation that underlies the digital photograph, the image's accustomed photographic directness is defamiliarised while its materiality becomes tangibly concrete. Yet the graphic quality which is implied in the choice of material does not automatically turn the image into a drawing. Nevertheless, an argument for the identification of the quality of drawing in this image is provided by German art historian Matthias Bleyl (2009). Bleyl challenges the assumption of the line or mark as the foundational gesture of drawing and replaces it with the point, as the basic differentiation between dark and light on which drawing initially rests. Following his proposition, Muñoz's image could be regarded as a particularly telling example of Bleyl's theory.¹⁸ Bleyl's idea strikes me as useful since it provides an antidote to the often stated 'primacy' of the line as the basic principle of drawing. Even if one rejects the implications of such a potentially essentialising hypothesis, the notion of the 'dot', simply on account of its minimal manifestation, can be said to evade an unproblematic notion of creative agency that is so easily allied with the line. This is especially the case if the 'drawn' dots appear, as in Muñoz's series, not only filtered through the automatic medium of photography but also the mechanical print.

Seen from the angle of photography, Muñoz's images return materiality to the medium, a factor which is customarily ignored in favour of the photograph's content.¹⁹ Yet the simultaneous dematerialisation of the photographic image, caused by the subtle movements of the surrounding air and the slow evaporation of the water, can only contribute to a problematisation of photography's reality factor. With regard to the printed nature of the image, the emphasis on and destabilising of the constituents of the print's make-up also foreground the volatile and constructed nature of the medium.

Yet, the suggestion of extreme tactility in form of the charcoal dust accounts for the appeal of this work. The connotation of dust with evanescence is reinforced by the volatile liquid surface. Thus temporality is quite literally infused into a still image of that most obviously evocative of genres, the human portrait.²⁰ The clustering of particles in some areas, their floating to the ground or base of the vitrine in others leads to a voiding of what was the image/portrait. At the same time the nature of the different media of photography, print and drawing are being put into question. These artistic strategies create a potent metaphor of human fragility and mortality as well as social (and artistic) categorisations. In the context of Muñoz's own socio-political environment they generate a specific metonymy of disappearance. (Matheson, 2009.) From the perspective of drawing, an alternative 'other' is introduced instead of the line and the mark. Sometimes regarded as a substitute to the line as the foundation of a drawing or image, the 'blot' here implies not the beginning of (a) drawing.²¹ The relapse of the image in Muñoz's series occurs not just at the level of its constituent material

¹⁷ Following Derrida, Elkins (1998) has claimed: 'All marks must ... dissolve into surfaces, as if they were shedding skins. In the end, there is no such thing as a mark – there are only surfaces' (p.28). Muñoz's use of screenprinting could be considered to head straight to the condition of the mark as surface.

¹⁸ Rosand (2002) argues similarly (p.2).

¹⁹ One interpretation of Roland Barthes's (1981) famous dictum from *Camera Lucida*: 'Whatever it grants to vision and whatever its manner, a photograph is always invisible; it is not it that we see' is the denial of the photograph's materiality in our everyday encounters with such images. The British anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards (2004) has been instrumental in highlighting the photograph's materiality. One could further discuss Muñoz's material makeover of the image in terms of the photogram. Although technically not a photogram, Muñoz's procedure appears to re-invest the photographic image with the direct indexical contact that is implied by this mode of photography more than any other.

²⁰ The straightforward, humanistic conception of the portrait could be argued to be largely responsible for the pathos of the work.

²¹ See Newman's (2003) comparison between da Vinci and Cozens on the blot or stain in art(history) and the implications for 'the status of the mark' (pp.97-99).

parts, but results in a non-image par essence. This deterioration is something which holds altogether more disturbing implications for the image as drawing, print or photograph. What is a blot, if not a mere blotch or stain? It is, above all, formless or 'informe'. The formless has been defined in art theory, following Georges Bataille, as something that breaks down classifications and thereby 'of undoing the whole system of meaning' (Foster et al 2004, 245).²²

Formlessness in Muñoz's *Narcissi* happens not only at the level of the image, but also in terms of the materials themselves, namely in the conflation of what are usually drawing's 'fundamentally split possibilities' between the 'dry' and 'dusty' (in the form of graphite) versus the 'fluid', usually pen and ink, here water (Straine, 2010, 1). A similar point can be made in relation to the image as print and photograph although the terms here are somewhat different. The usually dried, condensed and fixed surface of the print or photograph (namely the pigments applied to a support however miniscule they may be) becomes both liquid and dispersed. Furthermore, the melding of normally inimical substances, charcoal dust and water, may hint at the notion of 'abjection'.²³ For psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, who coined the term, abject matter recalls the separation from the maternal body, a necessary but traumatic stage in subject-formation. Any abject material, such as hair in soup or skin on milk, restages the original trauma. Such 'matter-out-of-place' - in anthropologist Mary Douglas's phrase - stands for the permeable and unstable boundaries of the self and hence elicits disgust. In the present example, the unstable nature of the physicality of the image refers to both the image's - and thereby drawing's, the photograph's and the print's - unfixed nature as well as the subject's unstable self.²⁴ In contrast to the humanist conception of self - which is suggested by the genre and type of portraiture in *Narcissi* - psychoanalysis and other theoretical approaches emphasise the subject's lack of fixity in relation to its surroundings, be they physical, social, emotional, human or non-human. The self's incessant coming-into-being includes the ever-present intimation, not only of its final dissolution in death, but also of the constant work of maintaining and guarding its boundaries, or the fashioning of an outwardly stable self.²⁵ The role and quality of the particular environment, or the 'symbolic order' in Lacan's terminology, is crucial. This aspect applies in any culture but will have very specific connotations for local, Columbian audiences. Muñoz's intertwining of image and presentation modes demonstrates how the shifting materiality of his image can be made to highlight and question not only features of the different media which he employs, but also the coming-into-being of the viewing (and creating) subject. Muñoz's realisation of this work as an on-going series further highlights the latter. For the viewer who encounters the individual (self)portraits of *Narcissi* at different stages of creation and dissolution, questions of the(ir own) psychological and social self as well as its formation as and in images are made palpable and almost shockingly real.

The strategies of all the artists discussed here prove the fertile interactions between drawing, print and photography and video. These move between an affinity with the trace, mark, line and gesture of drawing and the more mediated 'nature' of the latter image technologies. Printmaking plays a pre-eminent role in probing drawing's claim to immediacy and direct artistic expression by participating in the latter's inclination towards trace, mark, line and gesture. Concurrently it

²² As stated in Foster et al (2004), for Bataille, 'the "formless" resembles nothing. Lower than low, totally without example, and thus "impossible", it is that which declassifies' (p.246).

²³ According to the canonical definition of the psychoanalytical theorist Julia Kristeva, the abject is a psychically charged substance, often imagined, which exists somewhere between a subject (or person) and an object (or thing). At once alien to us and intimate with us, it exposes the fragility of our boundaries, of the distinctions of what is inside and what is outside. Abjection is thus a condition in which subjecthood is troubled, "where meaning collapses" (Kristeva) - hence its attraction for artists ... who often figure it through social detritus and bodily remains (which are sometimes equated) (Foster et al, 2004, 648).

²⁴ The role of images in the construction and maintenance of the self is emphasized and frequently linked to Jacques Lacan's theory of the 'mirror stage' as a significant phase in identity formation. For a brief discussion of this, see, for example, Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, 121-122.

²⁵ Psychoanalytic approaches allow a construction of further parallels between the workings and qualities of drawing and the formation of the human self. (See De Zegher, 2003, 167-169).

underlines their fabricated and hybrid rather than 'natural' or straightforwardly direct origination with consequences for both the producing and viewing subject.

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